

## 2. PROJECT AREA LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

THE PROJECT AREA lies in the Piedmont uplands valley of Brandywine Creek northwest of Wilmington, in Brandywine and Christiana hundreds.

It is served by a road system radiating northwestward from the city into the Pennsylvania hinterland. Connecting these radial roads are local service roads, of which Rockland Road is one. It leads from the mill village toward Concord Pike, the local trunk road.

On either side of the project area are larger roads, Kennett Pike (State Route 52) and Concord Pike (US 202), former turnpikes along the ridgetops that linked the Chester County, Pennsylvania, hinterland with the port of Wilmington, Delaware.

Rockland is served on the west by a very old local road from Centre Meeting. Now called Route 232, the road follows the valley of Wilson's Run. It has most frequently been called Adams' Dam Road or the road to Centre Meeting. A segment is part of Route 100, causing some confusion of nomenclature.

### SOILS, DRAINAGE, AND ENVIRONMENT

Soils belong to the Neshaminy-Aldino-Watchung association, "level to steep, well drained, moderately well drained, and poorly drained, medium-textured soils formed over dark-colored gabbroic rocks; on uplands" (Soil Conservation Service 1970).

The Rockland site is Neshaminy and Talleyville very stony silt loams, considered unsuitable for cultivation. Its steep topography virtually eliminates it as a possible prehistoric site.

The Delaware Piedmont physiographic province is a fertile area of

gently-rolling hills underlain by igneous and metamorphic rocks.

The fall line of the Brandywine is not an abrupt cataract. Instead, the stream falls gently through New Castle County to tidewater at Wilmington, providing power for numerous mill seats along the way. This widely-distributed source of cheap and reliable power was the creek's main geographical advantage

Numerous outcrops along the Brandywine provided ready quarries for building stone, from earliest colonial times. Stone houses were being built during the seventeenth century. Brandywine "granite" was used widely for rubble fill, in such projects as the breakwaters at the mouth of Delaware Bay.

The creek also is a source of fresh drinking water for the population of Wilmington. The creek's pure water was also used by the Rockland paper mill.

### PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

Previous investigations in the project area include the forthcoming cultural resources management plan for the Brandywine Creek State Park, which is liberally quoted herein (Blume, Clark, and Dunn 1990).

The Rockland mill complex (PLATE 1, FIGURE 3) has been prominently mentioned in a number of studies of Brandywine industry. The 80-acre historic district is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Webster 1971); the paper mill was inventoried by the Historic American Engineering Record before its conversion to multi-family dwellings, which essentially destroyed its historic fabric (Del.-63, Del.-64).